Frequently Asked Questions about
Geographic Response Plans (GRPs)

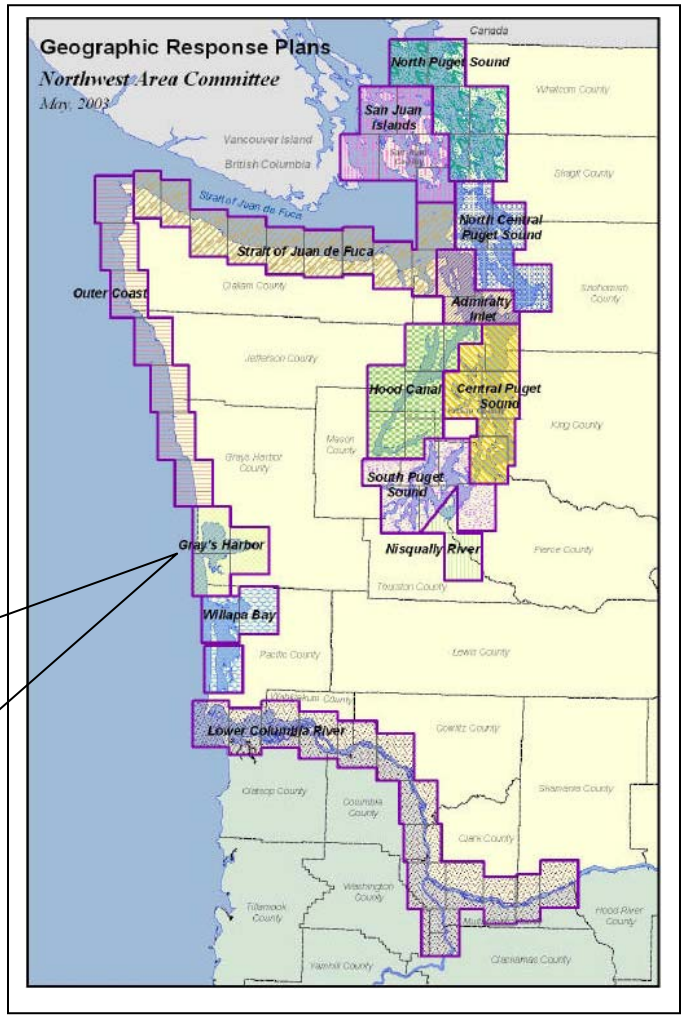
Spill Prevention, Preparedness and Response Program (SPPR)

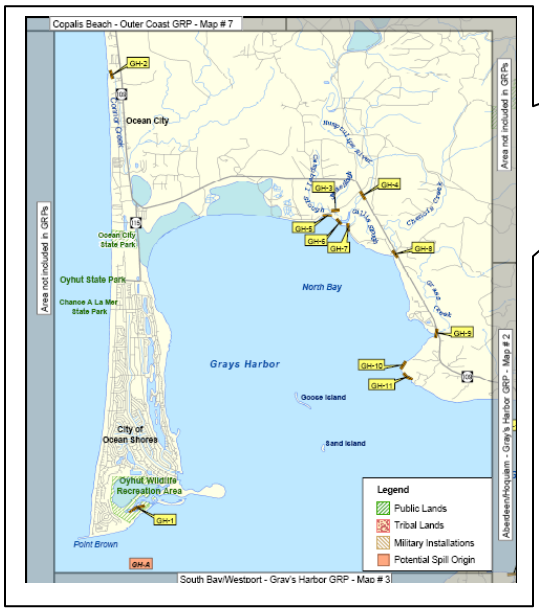
Q: What are GRPs?

A: Geographic Response Plans (GRPs) are site-specific response plans for oil spills to water. They include response strategies tailored to a specific beach, shore, or water way and are meant to minimize impact on sensitive areas threatened by the spill. Each GRP has two priorities, which are to:

- identify sensitive natural, cultural or significant economic resources; and
- describe and prioritize response strategies.

Currently, all coastal and some selected inland water areas in Washington and Oregon are covered by 34 GRPs.





Q: What information is included in GRPs?

A: Each regional GRP includes spill contact information, site descriptions, reference maps, and prioritized response protection strategies. They also contain shoreline information, sensitive resource descriptions, and logistical information all designed to ensure an aggressive and immediate response to oil spills.

Q: Will GRPs protect all resources?

A: Although the goal is to protect all natural resources, it may be necessary to prioritize some areas in order to minimize the impact on others during an oil spill. For example, boom may be used to concentrate spilled material so that it is easily collected. This strategy may result in oiling a beach where the impact is less damaging than oiling a herring breeding area or an area of cultural sensitivity.

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Q: How are the GRPs developed?

A: GRPs are developed through public workshops involving federal, state, and local oil spill emergency response experts. Representatives from tribes, industry, ports, environmental organizations, community members and response contractors participate as well. Workshop participants identify resources which need protection, develop operational strategies, and identify available spill response personnel and equipment in the area. The information is then compiled and published as annexes to the Northwest Area Contingency Plan.

Q: How are GRPs used?

A: GRP strategies serve as guidelines for responsible parties, federal and state agencies' coordinated efforts and are deployed by private contractors during an oil spill. Once a spill occurs the goal is to minimize the damage on the environment. This can be done in two ways:

- collect the spilled material; and
- try to control what the spilled material comes in contact with.

Each GRP strategy contains a list of pre-planned response strategies that can be deployed immediately to minimize damage to critical resources during the first few hours of an oil spill. Once a coordinated response has been established, the GRP protection strategies may be refined and enhanced. Additional sensitive areas are identified to be protected based on real-time assessments and input from natural resource trustees and persons with local knowledge.

Q: Will there be times when GRPs are not appropriate or feasible?

A: GRPs are intended to be flexible and to allow spill responders to modify them, as necessary, to fit the prevailing conditions. Several factors may be in play that limits the effectiveness of GRP strategies such as:

- **Type of product**: Some GRPs have been designed for use when persistent oil products are spilled (heavier, black oil) and may not be suitable for other petroleum or hazardous substances.
- **Weather Conditions**: Environmental conditions (wind, currents, and tides), together with the limitations of existing spill response technology, may prevent the effective protection of some areas.

Q: What about other sensitive sites where GRPs currently do not exist?

A: The sites selected for consideration of GRPs are not meant to be exclusive. The fact that a GRP has not been developed for a sensitive site does not imply that the site should not be protected during a spill. GRP development can benefit sites where no GRP are in place, because the tools and experience that are used to develop a GRP can also be transferred to non-GRP sites.

Q: How are the GRPs maintained?

A: The Washington Department of Ecology is responsible for maintaining, updating, and distributing GRPs for Washington, the Lower Columbia River and other inland rivers and watersheds. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is responsible for GRPs in Oregon. The Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10, is responsible for the Middle Columbia River and Snake River GRPs.

Q: How are GRPs tested?

A: Oil spill response contractors frequently test GRP strategies during drills. Testing provides an opportunity for response contractors to verify effectiveness, deploy equipment and train personnel to ensure that they are prepared for a real oil spill. GRP strategies are updated based on the results of the drills.

Q: Where can I find out more information on GRPs?

A: Current versions of the GRPs are posted on the Northwest Area Committee/Regional Response Team website at: http://www.rrt10nwac.com/, together with links to the WDOE, ODEQ, USCG and the EPA websites.